

BREMERTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chief Strachan's Weekly Update

Sunday morning Officer Phil Whatley investigated a vehicle that had crashed into a tree at Charleston Blvd and Rodgers Street. There were no injuries, and Officer Whatley found that the 24 year old driver stated that a raccoon ran out in front of him and he swerved. Public works also had to cut the tree down after the totaled car was removed.



On Tuesday, Officer Johnny Rivera observed a car with a temporary license permit in the rear window; what caught his attention was the date for the expiration of the license:



Although he was tempted, when Johnny issued the citation for expired registration, he did not assign a court date of February 30.

On to a much more serious subject: Some of you know that several weeks ago, Sheriff Simpson and I co-authored a column in the Sun about the inflammatory and misleading headlines, and implied messages in some media coverage, that are not helpful in the ongoing dialogue about trust, transparency and relationships with the community. Following the incident in Olympia where an officer used deadly force when he reported a man with a skateboard was assaulting him, one of the local TV stations ran the headline: "Olympia Cop Shoots Two Unarmed Men Suspected of Stealing Beer". The widespread response to that column seems to indicate that many people agree that we need to be attentive to the implications and negative impression that some messages in the media carry. This week, I wanted to offer another (bad) example.

In the Texas town of Palestine, officers used deadly force in an incident involving a man who had been reported to steal beer and was now in a bathroom in a restaurant. This article about the original incident is headlined: "[Palestine Police Fatally Shoot Theft Suspect Who Had BB Gun](#)".

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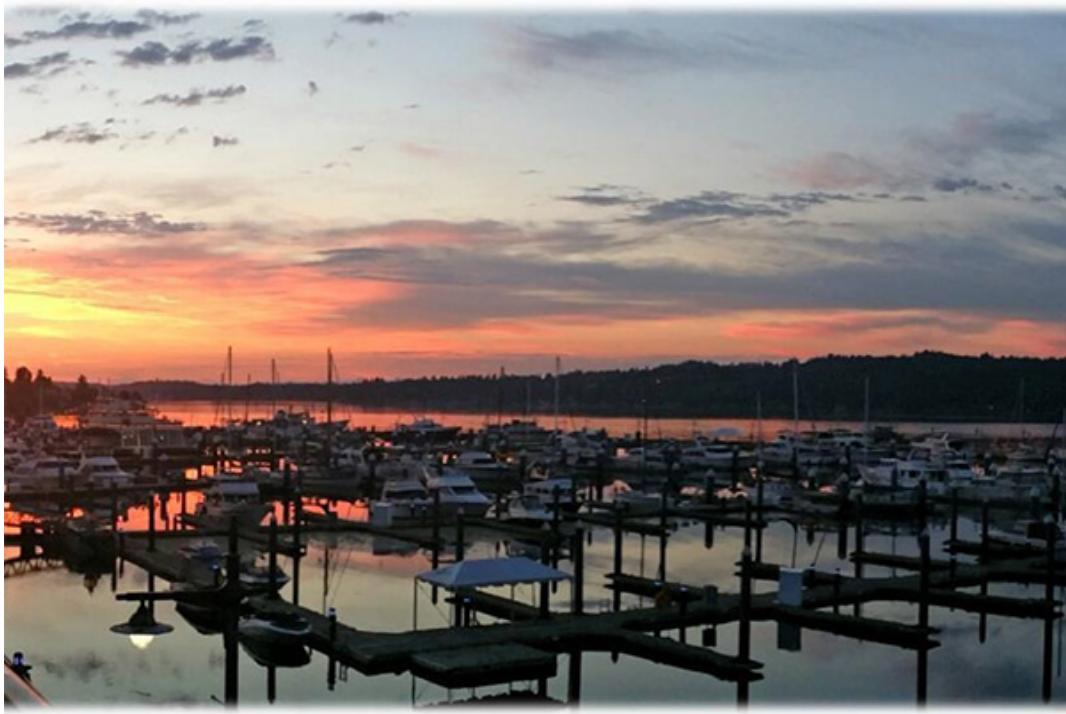
1025 Burwell Street

Another article is headlined: "[Police in Texas Town Shoot, Kill Shoplifting Suspect](#)".

People who write headlines know that words matter. The clear implication, particularly for low-information readers and listeners, is that the police shot the man because he had taken beer. And, he only had a BB gun. That sounds like the police completely overreacted, doesn't it? The next link is the actual body cam video of one of the officers. It is graphic and does include the actual shooting. However, it was released by the department because the public can and should know what happened. Think about how the officers showed discretion and respect to the man, removed him from an area where there were innocent bystanders at an Applebee's Restaurant, and how quickly the situation changed: [video link](#) (warning, graphic content).

Most media outlets do a very good job. These are just some extreme examples. But, they really do not contribute to a thoughtful conversation about how we, as police officers, can continue to improve the way we do our jobs. The sensationalistic and misleading messages just create more confusion, misunderstanding, and lack of dialogue. We all need to be critical thinkers.

Finally, Sunday morning Officer Frank Shaw took this photo of the marina at dawn:



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